

## Public Support for Enlargement: Economic, Cultural, or Normative?

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DISCUSSION PAPER No. 107

**Public Support for Enlargement:  
Economic, Cultural, or Normative?**

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**Abstract**

The current research questioned whether public opinion on enlargement can be adequately explained only by economic calculation and cultural/community identity. When the analytical viewpoint was expanded from the conventional individual level to state level, it was revealed that constructivist considerations—such as the democratization and reunification of Europe—play a critical role in pushing forward enlargement. Drawing on the perspective of international relations, this study introduced a synthetic model to analyze public opinion on enlargement in the EU's 15 old member states. The analysis using a Eurobarometer dataset showed that on public support for enlargement, constructivist attitudes held as much sway as cultural/community attitudes. In fact, expectations of democratization were the most important determinant of support for enlargement in the case of Turkey.

**Keywords:** EU, enlargement, public opinion, Turkey

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## Introduction

The European Union's enlargement entered a new phase after 2004, resulting in the addition of Bulgaria and Romania, neither dominantly Catholic nor Protestant countries, in 2007, and the remaining candidate countries (excluding Croatia) being beyond the "fault line of the clash of civilizations" (Huntington, 1996) for EU member states. There is relatively little research on public opinion regarding "Eastern enlargement" as contrasted with "European integration." This is because European integration pertains to both the "deepening" and "widening" of Europe, while enlargement essentially is only "widening." Previous studies of European integration highlighted public fears of the inflow of immigrants and minorities, but paid little attention to the fact that accession means new member *states* much more than new member *masses*. This paper, drawing on literature covering domestic EU and international politics, applies a synthetic model that incorporates economic, cultural and normative judgments to account for public support for further enlargement to the Western Balkans and Turkey.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Although one of the most controversial aspects of Eastern enlargement is Turkey's potential membership, most literature on Turkey-EU relationships has tended to be descriptive or institutional accounts of Turkey's attempt to join the European Union. As Uğur and Canefe (2004, 1) summarized, these studies have discussed either the EU's (unfair) treatment of Turkey or Turkey's political and economic problems hampering its accession to the EU.<sup>1</sup> Çarkoğlu and Rubin (2003) and Canefe and Uğur (2004b) were among the first studies that empirically examined who supported Turkey's EU accession and why. The latter specifically revealed that compared with the past, the state elite had become relatively cautious about accession, whereas antiestablishment groups, such as Islamists and ethnic minorities, had become more supportive.

## Review of Literature

Despite the huge volume of literature on public support for European integration among member states,<sup>2</sup> there have been only a limited number of studies focused specifically on support for enlargement at the micro level. Jones and van der Bijl (2004) used state-level analysis to show that aggregate support by a member state for a new candidate country depended on state-level factors harnessing a perception of closeness, such as trade relations and geographical proximity. De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2005) adopted an individual-level model that used support for enlargement as the dependent variable, and demonstrated the primacy of anti-immigration sentiment over individuals' evaluations of economic and government performance, but the sample was limited to Denmark and the Netherlands. A more important problem is that the few existing studies have tended to use the same major independent variables as those found in analysis of European integration, even though the latter is perceived primarily in terms of deepening rather than widening.

The literature on European integration has broadly centered on economic calculation and cultural/community identity as determinants of public support. The analytical

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However, there has been little systematic empirical investigation into the EU side of the story.

<sup>2</sup> Questionnaire texts have changed over the years. The most recent questionnaire asked, "Generally speaking, do you think that (our country's) membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing, neither good nor bad, or don't know?" While some authors used a few question items to form a composite index to measure the level of support for integration (Hooghe and Marks 2005), the author has not been able to find any case in which an item that explicitly asked about enlargement was included in the index.

framework has been expanded with subjective-objective and individual-sociotropic distinctions (Hooghe and Marks, 2005), but the core argument can be summarized as follows: The economic calculation model claims that support for integration is strong among those who stand to benefit from economic integration. Managers and professionals were found to be supportive of integration, while manual laborers were against it. The model also predicts that citizens who would benefit from EU budget transfers favor integration (Gabel and Palmer, 1995; Anderson and Reichert, 1996; Gabel, 1998a; Gabel, 1998b). Brinegar and Jolly (2005) later revised the model with the factor endowment theorem<sup>3</sup> to show that support for European integration is strong among managers and professionals in capital-rich countries, as well as unskilled workers in labor-abundant countries.

The cultural/community view contends that people who have strong national identity or hostility toward other cultures tend to see integration as a threat and thus oppose it (McLaren, 2002; Carey, 2002; DiezMedrano, 2003; Kriesi and Lachat, 2004; De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005). More recent studies have shown that cultural factors have a stronger effect than economic rationality.<sup>4</sup> This is partly because the focus of public opinion shifted over the years. Initially, European integration primarily meant market

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<sup>3</sup> The basic logic is that those who possess relatively scarce resources in their own country oppose market liberalization, while those with abundant resources want to sell their capital or labor in a competitive market.

<sup>4</sup> Jones and van der Bijl (2004) drew attention to socioeconomic interaction that could strengthen perceptions of community between existing and candidate member states. Although this new perspective is important, the application of this model with regard to a limited number of candidate countries would bring spurious relationships into the equation.

integration, but since the 1990s right-wing parties have driven opposition to the accommodation of diverse cultures (Hooghe and Marks 2005, 426-7).

Variables that account for support for integration do not adequately reflect the logic of public support for enlargement. First, in terms of economic calculation, European integration (deepening and widening) tends to divide citizens in present member states into winners and losers, while enlargement (widening) results in the relatively unavoidable burdens of higher costs and fewer benefits. Self-centered economic reasons for supporting enlargement are thus expected to be generally weak. Second, the cultural/community model depicts minorities or immigrants as threats to the member state's culture. However, enlargement results in not only new immigrants, but also more European countries governing themselves in line with EU policies as new member states. Consequently, independent variables used in enlargement analysis have lacked a normative, constructivist perception supporting the inclusion of new member *states*, not just immigrants en masse. It is true that both economic-cost/benefit and cultural/community theses are deeply rooted in individual judgments. However, if political elites can lead and affect public opinion (Steenbergen and Jones 2002; Hooghe and Marks, 2005), individuals might well also base their referendum decisions on the constructivist argument that enlargement promotes the common interests of the European Union.

**Table 1. Studies on Support/Preferences for EU Integration/Enlargement**

	Integration	Enlargement	
Independent variables	Public support		State preferences
Economic calculation	Gabel & Palmer (1995); Anderson & Reichert (1996); Gabel (1998a); Gabel (1998b); Brinegar & Jolly (2005)		Hagen (1996); Hayward (1996); Grabbe & Hughes (1998)
Cultural/community identity	McLaren (2002); Carey (2002); DiezMedrano (2003); Kriesi & Lachat (2004); De Vreese & Boomgaarden (2005)	Jones & van der Bijl (2004); De Vreese & Boomgaarden (2005)	
Constructivism			Moravcsik & Vachudova (2005); Schimmelfennig (2005); Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier (2005); Brennan (2006); Sjursen (2006)

*Source:* Compiled by the author from the above sources.

Indeed, at the international level of analysis, the great puzzle of why existing EU members were willing to admit new members despite the concomitant burdens has been best explained by the constructivist theory that member states became strongly committed, whether of their own will or by normative persuasion, to a united and democratic Europe (Moravcsik and Vachudova 2005, p. 203; Brennan 2006; Schimmelfennig 2005; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2005; Sjursen 2006).<sup>5</sup> In particular, Sjursen (2006) concluded after an extensive review of the literature that these normative arguments were more rights-based (constitutional democracy) than value-based (collective identity), and were confined to Europe because these countries jointly experienced the burden of Cold War division. The same logic may also apply to

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<sup>5</sup> While Schimmelfennig (2005) argues that pro-enlargement states used normative rhetoric, Sjursen (2006) points out that such rhetoric must have been accepted as legitimate by the member states (communicative rationality) for rhetorical entrapment to be effective.

support on the individual level. A synthetic view of integration and enlargement studies in Table 1 points to a relatively neglected area of research that incorporates a constructivist (normative) element for individual-level analysis.

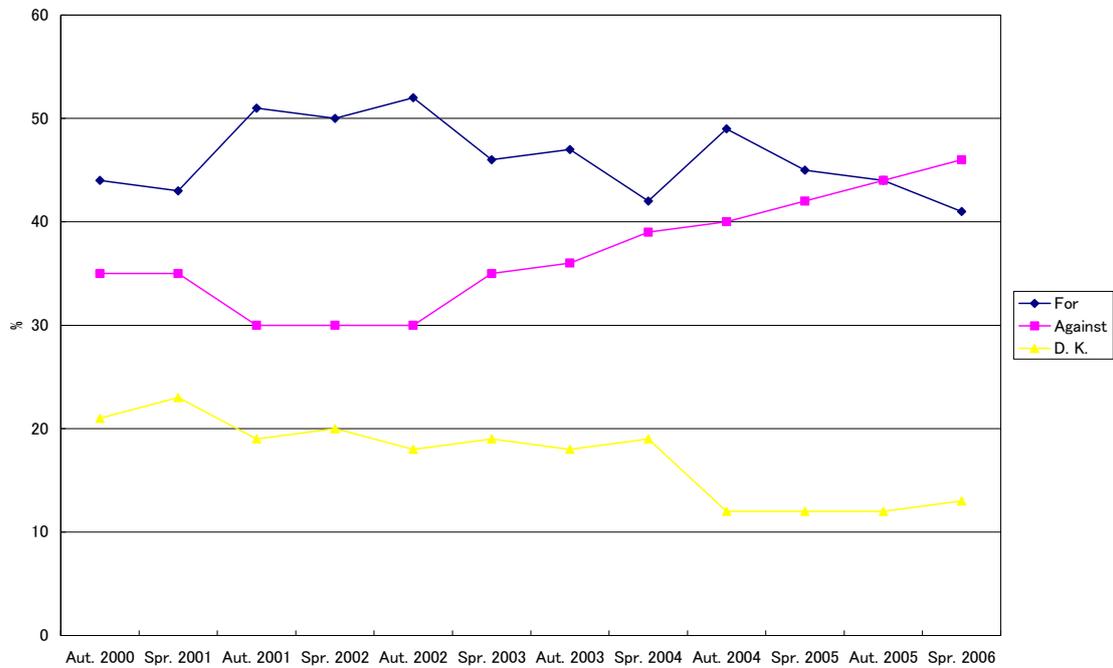
### **Research Design**

The current research uses the Eurobarometer 65.2 dataset to measure the importance of normative (constructivist) considerations in determining public support for Eastern enlargement in general, and Turkey's accession in specific, in comparison with economic or cultural/community considerations. Two regressions are run, one for the Western Balkans and Turkey, and the other for Turkey only.

#### *Hypothesis*

Among previous literature, it is possible to identify three sources of public attitude in the member states toward enlargement, i.e., economic calculation, cultural/community identity, and constructivism. Only the constructivist perspective seems to give a substantive answer to the question of why better-off member states have decided to admit worse-off countries. Individual-level analyses have largely neglected constructivist reasons. Yet until spring 2005, opinion polls in the EU's first 15 member states consistently showed stronger support for enlargement than against it (Figure 1).

**Figure 1 Public Opinion on Enlargement in the EU's First 15 Member States**



Source: Compiled by the author from Eurobarometer, various waves.

The enlargement puzzle thus seems to apply to public opinion as well. It is hypothesized therefore that *in “old” member states, individuals who believe that enlargement would democratize and reunite Europe tend to support accession of new member states.* At the same time, economic calculation and cultural/community identity are not discarded but integrated into a comprehensive model in order to measure the relative weight of each variable. The effect of this constructivist attitude is compared with those of economic and cultural attitudes in a synthetic model (Table 2).

**Table 2. Synthetic Model: Independent and Control Variables**

Conceptualization	Operationalization	Question
<i>Economic calculation</i>		
Employment	Job transfers	QD10a_2: Increases jobs transfer to countries where labor is cheaper.
	More workers	QD10a_4: Increases influx of workers from future member states of the European Union.
Production and trade	World's largest trade bloc	QD10a_1: Makes European Union biggest trade bloc in world.
Resource transfers	Aid for new members	QD10a_3: Increases support for development in candidate and potential-candidate countries.
<i>Cultural/community identity</i>		
Multiculturalism	Enriches culture	QD11a_3: Enriches Europe's cultural diversity.
Perceived threat	Lowers living standards	QD11a_2: Lowers standard of living in European Union.
<i>Constructivism</i>		
Democratization	Promotes democracy	QD9a_3: Promotes democracy on European continent.
Stronger union	Peace and stability	QD9a_1: Ensures peace and stability on European continent.
<i>Control</i>		
Knowledge		QD1: How well informed do you feel about enlargement?
Political orientation		D1: Left/right self-placement
Gender		D10: Gender
Age		D11: Age

*Source:* Compiled by the author from the Eurobarometer 65.2 dataset.

*Note:* Manual laborers might feel threatened by a decline in employment opportunities, whereas managers and professionals might welcome an increased supply of low-cost labor. Neither the interaction variable that tapped the effect of the manual labor attribute, nor the one that tapped the effect of the professional/managerial attribute, were statistically significant when included in the regression equation. In their responses to the questionnaire, manual laborers emphasized the threat of unemployment and job transfers while professional/managerial respondents did not consider this to be a threat. The one-tailed t-test for the difference between the two means, when applied to the above data, showed that the mean value of the answers was higher for both QD10a\_2 ( $p < 0.01$ ) and QD10a\_4 ( $p < 0.10$ ).

### *Data*

Eurobarometer 65.2, a special survey on enlargement (*Special Eurobarometer 255: Attitudes towards European Union Enlargement*) conducted in spring 2006, has the most comprehensive set of questions about enlargement of any survey to date. Its dataset contains questions that address the three sources of opinion, namely, economic calculation, cultural/community identity and constructivist variables. The set of independent variables and corresponding questions are shown in Table 2. First, the economic calculation model refers to employment opportunities, trade liberalization and resource (budgetary) transfers. Second, the model of culture and community involves multiculturalism and perceived threat to society. Third, constructivist arguments are represented by support for democratization and a stronger European Union. The full use of this data is limited, however, because in order to increase the total number of questions, some were asked to only half of the respondents. While the current study uses some of these “split questions,” the author chose a set of questions (Split A) over the other set (Split B), since the former included more appropriate economic, cultural and constructivist variables.

### *Dependent variable*

The dependent variable is public support for enlargement in the old 15 EU member states. For the regression concerning the Western Balkans and Turkey, it is a composite index calculated as the unweighted average of support for the accession of Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Albania, and Turkey. For answers to the question (QD16) “Once (INSERT

COUNTRY) complies with all the conditions set by the European Union, would you be ... to the accession of (INSERT COUNTRY) to the European Union?,” the coded level of support for each candidate country is in a range: 4 (“totally in favor”), 3 (“fairly in favor”), 2 (“fairly opposed”) and 1 (“totally opposed”). For the regression concerning Turkey only, the dependent variable is the coded level of support described above.

### *Independent variables*

All the independent variables are attitudinal in order to ensure comparability. The coded answers range is 4 (“totally agree”), 3 (“tend to agree”), 2 (“tend to disagree”) and 1 (“totally disagree”). “Do not know” replies are recorded as missing values. In previous studies about European integration, the variable of multiculturalism and national identity is measured by the respondent’s 1) perception of so-called minorities who have resided in EU member states after the Second World War, and 2) their anxiety about losing national identity to European (EU) identity (McLaren 2006, 69-92). In regard to enlargement in particular, the former question is more appropriate than the latter for measuring the respondent’s perception of accession. Of the two culture-specific questions in the dataset, the one about cultural diversity (Split A group) was chosen over the one about loss of own culture (Split B group).

### *Control variables*

The control variables consist of knowledge about enlargement from 4 (“Very well informed”) to 1 (“Not at all well informed”), left/right political orientation from 1 (“far left”) to 10 (“far right”), gender (female = 0, male = 1), and age from 1 (“15-24”) to 4 (“55 or over”). Occupational differences such as professionals/managers and manual

laborers were not included in the model since they slightly depress the regression coefficients of the economic-calculation variables.

### *Analysis*

The above hypothesis was tested by multiple regressions. The hierarchical linear model, when applied to the data below, showed that the potential country-level effect was not substantively important. The country-level variance of the dependent variable accounted for less than one-tenth of the total variance of the dependent variable. The hierarchical linear model thus was not used for the following analysis. Also, as in this study, it is important to treat enlargement as distinct from integration since perceptions of the two phenomena are not similar. The result of a correlation analysis with another Eurobarometer dataset (EB63.4<sup>6</sup>) showed that there was only a weak relationship ( $r=0.259$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $N=15,425$ ) between public support for the European Union (EB63.4 QA8a) and enlargement (EB63.4 QA28.4) among the 15 old member states.

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<sup>6</sup> This dataset was not used for the regressions that follow since it included few questions specifically about enlargement.

## Results

Table 3 summarizes the results of separate multiple regressions regarding support for enlargement to (1) the Western Balkans and Turkey or (2) Turkey. As stated earlier, the independent variables are mutually comparable in each regression since they are all attitudinal and measured by the same four-point scale. For the Western Balkans and Turkey, constructivist variables were nearly as strong determinants of public support for enlargement as cultural/community variables. The constructivist variables “promotes democracy” and “peace and stability” had unstandardized regression coefficients (*bs*) of 0.188 and 0.111, respectively, whereas those for “enriches culture” and “lowers living standards” were 0.168 and -0.188, respectively. On the other hand, economic calculation variables had much more limited effect on public support, with the strongest regression coefficient being 0.085. Among the four control variables, three were statistically significant. Support for enlargement is thus stronger among EU citizens who are better informed, more leftist and younger.

Public opinion on the accession of Turkey primarily showed a similar tendency. The effect of constructivist variables “promotes democracy” ( $b=0.181$ ) and “peace and stability” ( $b=0.103$ ) on the average was fairly close to that of the cultural/community variables “enriches culture” ( $b=0.162$ ) and “lowers life standards” ( $b=-0.167$ ). However, there were two differences from the above pattern for Eastern enlargement. First, the economic calculation variable “job transfers” ( $b=-0.116$ ) was slightly higher than one of the two constructivist variables, “peace and stability” ( $b=0.103$ ). Second, and more

importantly, the most decisive reason for supporting enlargement to Turkey was the expectation of democratization. Among the independent variables in the regression for Turkey, the first of the two constructivist variables, “promotes democracy,” had the strongest regression coefficient.

**Table 3. Determinants of EU Public Support for Enlargement**

	Enlargement scope							
	Western Balkans and Turkey <sup>1</sup>				Turkey <sup>2</sup>			
	<i>b</i>	S.E.	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	S.E.	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Independent variables<sup>3</sup></b>								
<i>Economic calculation</i>								
Job transfers	-0.078	0.017	-4.636	0.000	-0.116	0.021	-5.410	0.000
More workers	-0.052	0.018	-2.832	0.005	-0.079	0.023	-3.348	0.001
World's largest trade bloc	0.014	0.014	0.972	0.331	0.009	0.018	0.497	0.619
Aid for new members	0.085	0.019	4.448	0.000	0.068	0.024	2.788	0.005
<i>Cultural/community identity</i>								
Lower living standards	0.168	0.017	10.030	0.000	0.162	0.021	7.637	0.000
Enriches culture	-0.188	0.014	-13.406	0.000	-0.167	0.018	-9.382	0.000
<i>Constructivism</i>								
Promotes democracy	0.188	0.020	9.592	0.000	0.181	0.025	7.277	0.000
Peace and stability	0.111	0.018	6.140	0.000	0.103	0.023	4.496	0.000
<b>Control variables<sup>4</sup></b>								
Knowledge	0.066	0.016	4.273	0.000	0.114	0.014	8.228	0.000
Left/right orientation	-0.027	0.006	-4.769	0.000	-0.038	0.007	-5.378	0.000

Gender	-0.027	0.022	-1.197	0.231	-0.068	0.020	-3.461	0.001
Age	-0.066	0.011	-6.026	0.000	-0.015	0.029	-0.517	0.605
Constant	1.428	0.091	15.688	0.000	1.645	0.116	14.207	0.000
	Number of obs. = 4,489				Number of obs. = 4,439			
	R-squared = 0.246				R-squared = 0.170			
	Adj R-squared = 0.244				Adj R-squared = 0.167			
	S. E. of estimate = 0.738				S. E. of estimate = 0.933			
	F-stat. = 121.518				F-stat. = 75.339			
	Prob > F = 0.000				Prob > F = 0.000			

*Source:* Compiled by the author from the Eurobarometer 65.2 dataset.

*Note:* Entries are results of two multiple regressions.

<sup>1</sup> The dependent variable is support for accession averaged out for Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Albania, and Turkey. Support for accession of each country is measured on a four-point scale: 4 (“totally in favor”), 3 (“fairly in favor”), 2 (“fairly opposed”) and 1 (“totally opposed”). “Do not know” replies are recorded as missing values.

<sup>2</sup> The dependent variable is support for accession of Turkey.

<sup>3</sup> The independent variables are measured on a four-point scale: 4 (“totally agree”), 3 (“tend to agree”), 2 (“tend to disagree”) and 1 (“totally disagree”). “Do not know” replies are recorded as missing values.

<sup>4</sup> Knowledge about enlargement is measured on a four-point scale ranging from 4 (“very well informed”) to 1 (“not at all well informed”), left/right political orientation on a ten-point scale ranging from 1 (“far left”) to 10 (“far right”), and age on a four-point scale ranging from 1 (“15-24”) to 4 (“55 or over”). Gender is a dummy variable with female = 0 and male = 1.

## **Conclusion**

The current research questioned whether public opinion on enlargement can be adequately explained only by economic calculation and cultural/community identity. When the analytical viewpoint was expanded from the conventional individual level to state level, it was revealed that constructivist considerations—such as the democratization and reunification of Europe—play a critical role in pushing forward enlargement. Drawing on the perspective of international relations, this study introduced a synthetic model to analyze public opinion on enlargement in the EU's 15 old member states.

The foregoing analysis using a Eurobarometer dataset showed that on public support for enlargement, constructivist attitudes—particularly expectations of democratization—held as much sway as cultural/community attitudes. In fact, expectations of democratization were the most important determinant of support for enlargement in the case of Turkey. Economic calculations generally played a much less significant role in shaping support for enlargement, except the fear of job transfers to Turkey, which had a tangible effect on support for this country's accession.

In conclusion, EU citizens who support further enlargement tend to be people who accept cultural pluralism in their own countries, and also believe in extending both democracy and EU norms beyond existing borders. Thus, the most crucial difference in opinion between the protagonists and antagonists of enlargement seems to lie in

whether the inclusion of new members would contribute to the democratization and stabilization of the European region or not.

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